

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 1061

FODAG

E.O. 1652: GDS

TAGS: FAO

SUBJECT: NEW ZEALAND FLOATING POSSIBILITY OF NOMINATING ERIC

OJALA TO BE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FAO

SUMMARY: NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE TO FAO, UNDER INSTRUCTION FROM HIS GOVERNMENT TO TEST REACTION OF WEO COUNTRIES TO POSSIBLE NOMINATION OF ERIC OJALA TO BE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FAO, RAISED THIS QUESTION IN EVENING MEETING OF GENEVA GROUP IN ROME JANUARY 23. HE ASKED WHETHER MEMBERS OF GROUP KNEW OF ANY OTHER WEO CANDIDATE LIKELY TO BE PRESENTED, AND FOR ANY COMMENT THEY COULD MAKE ON POSSIBILITY OF OJALA. NO INFORMATION WAS FORTHCOMING ON ANY OTHER POSSIBLE WEO CANDIDATE, AND MEMBERS OF GROUP MADE ON LIMITED COMMENT ON POSSIBILITY OF OJALA NOMINATION. NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE INDICATED HIS GOVERNMENT PLANS APPROACH CAPITALS OF WEO COUNTRIES DURING NEXT FEW DAYS. END SUMMARY.

1. NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE PLIMMER ASKED ON JANUARY 22 THAT ITEM ON NOMINATIONS FOR FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL BE ADDED TO AGENDA FOR JANUARY 23 GENEVA GROUP MEETING. (COMMENT: IT WAS IMMEDIATELY SUSPECTED THAT HE WOULD RAISE OJALA'S NAME. HIS INSTRUCTIONS PROBABLY WERE RECEIVED ABOUT JANUARY 21 OF 22 SINCE AS OF JANUARY 17 HE INDICATED TO OTHERS THAT HE HAD RE-
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CEIVED NO INSTRUCTIONS ON OJALA, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT RULE OUT

THE POSSIBILITY AT THAT TIME.)

2. PRINCIPAL POINTS MADE BY PLIMMER IN RAISING OJALA'S NAME WERE AS FOLLOWS: HE REVIEWED OJALA'S QUALIFICATIONS IN TERMS OF EDUCATIONAL TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE IN GOVERNMENT, UNITED NATIONS, AND FAO. HE SURMISED THAT SELECTIONS OF OFFICIAL TO OTHER SPECIALIZED AGENCIES HAD LEFT DOOR OPEN FOR POSSIBLE WEO HEAD FOR FAO: UNIDO HAD GONE TO ALGERIA, UNESCO TO AN AFRICAN (PRESUMABLY WEAKENING AFRICAN CANDIDACIES FOR FAO), AND UNEP SEEMED LIKELY TO GO TO LATIN AMERICAN (SIC). HE REVIEWED NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICULAR QUALIFICATIONS FOR PUTTING FORWARD CANDIDATE, PARTICULARLY ITS RELATIVE EMPHASIS ON AGRICULTURAL AID, AND ITS ROLE AMONG ASIAN COUNTRIES. HE POINTED OUT THAT NEW ZEALAND HAS NEVER HAD ONE OF ITS CITIZENS AS HEAD OF ANY OF UN OR SPECIALIZED AGENCIES, WHICH WHILE NOT AFFIRMATIVE FACTOR IN ITS FAVOR AT LEAST EXCLUDED THAT ARGUMENT AGAINST IT.

3. ALTHOUGH NONE OF GROUP MEMBERS CAME FORTH WITH ANY INFORMATION ABOUT OTHER POSSIBLE WEO CANDIDATES, SEVERAL DID OFFER COMMENT ON OJALA'S POSSIBILITIES. SWISS REPRESENTATIVE SAID HIS GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT AFTER BOERMA FAO LEADERSHIP LOGICALLY SHOULD GO TO DEVELOPING COUNTRY. PLIMMER WAS QUESTIONED ON REACTION OF ASIAN COUNTRIES, SPECIFICALLY WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN ANY OPPOSITION ON GROUNDS POSITION SHOULD GO TO DEVELOPING COUNTRY. PLIMMER SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO ADVERSE REACTION ON THAT BASIS: ONLY NEGATIVE RESPONSE WAS ON BASIS THEY HAD ALREADY COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO ANOTHER CANDIDATE (E.G., MOSLEM ASIAN COUNTRIES). HE SAID ASIAN RESPONSE HAD BEEN GENERALLY ENCOURAGING, ALTHOUGH SOME HAD THUS FAR GIVEN NO REACTION AND SOME OTHER HAD GIVEN ONLY PRELIMINARY FAVORABLE REACTION SUBJECT TO COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES OF GOVERNMENTS.

4. ITALIAN REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTED THAT THE NEW ZEALAND MOVE COMES TOO LATE: HIS GOVERNMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, IS ALREADY COMMITTED. NETHERLANDS REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTED THAT MAYBE IT WAS ITALY WHICH WAS ACTING TOO SOON. NETHERLANDS GOVERNMENT PLANS NOT TO DECIDE UNTIL OCTOBER, ALTHOUGH IT COULD CHANGE ITS MIND. JAPANESE REPRESENTATIVE SUGGESTED GOVERNMENTS BE CAREFUL NOT TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TOO SOON. ACCOUNT SHOULD BE TAKEN OF COMPOSITION OF NEW WORLD FOOD COUNCIL. JAPANESE GOVERNMENT HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT DECIDED, AND PLANS TO WAIT AND SEE UNTIL LAST MOMENT. DEPUTY GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE URGED NEW ZEALAND, HOWEVER, TO PUT FORWARD ITS CANDIDACY VERY SOON IF IT DOES INTEND TO NOMINATE HIM.

5. AFTER MEETING PLIMMER TOLD U.S. REPRESENTATIVE THAT ONE EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT HAS APPROACHED NEW ZEALAND ON ITS OWN INITIATIVE, URGING THAT IT MOVE AHEAD WITH OJALA'S NOMINATION IF IT DID INTEND TO NOMINATE HIM. VOLPE

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